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**AT LEAST \$18.3 MILLION INCREASE IN EDUCATION FUNDS FOR ALASKA AT
RISK IF CONGRESS DOES NOT ACT**

As Congress returns on Monday to finish the federal budget more than two months late, millions of schoolchildren across the country are still waiting for increases in education funding. The bipartisan agreement abandoned by the Republican leadership when they adjourned in November would increase federal education investment by almost \$8 billion, including an increase of at least \$18.3 million for Alaska's students.

"When Congress left town prior to Election Day, it left some very important unfinished business," said U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. "When members come back to Washington they need to put politics aside and finish this piece of the nation's business by passing an education budget that includes the increases in the bipartisan agreement."

The budget agreement set aside by Republicans in Congress included new funding to reduce class size; provide emergency repairs for run down schools; increase after-school opportunities; improve teacher quality; help turn around low-performing schools; strengthen support for children with disabilities, and expand access to and funding for college. However, at the very last minute, the agreement did not receive the support of the congressional leadership. Failure by Congress to pass this bipartisan budget would demonstrate their willingness to put partisan politics ahead of America's children.

Almost \$8 billion in new funding for education is in jeopardy if the Congress fails to act on the FY2001 budget, including increases for Alaska in a number of areas, among them:

Reducing Class Size with the third installment to hire and train 100,000 new teachers over seven years to reduce class sizes in early grades to 18 students per class: + \$2,119,258

Upgrade Teacher Skills and Quality with Eisenhower Professional Development State Grants that help teachers improve their skills in core academic subjects and reduce the number of uncertified and out-of-field teachers: + \$1,233,292

Improve Reading and Math by increasing Title I Grants to local education agencies which help disadvantaged students learn the basics and achieve to high standards: + \$1,921,841

School Renovation Grants would provide support for emergency repairs, such as repair of roofs, plumbing and electrical systems, meeting fire and safety codes; a portion of the funds will also go to technology and special education activities: +\$6,148,750

21st Century After-School Programs offer families a safe place for their children to learn during after-school and summertime hours: +\$12,602,194

Strengthen Accountability by accelerating state and local efforts to improve the lowest performing Title I schools with reforms ranging from intensive teacher training to required implementation of proven reforms to school takeovers: +\$297,498

Comprehensive School Reform help schools develop or adapt comprehensive school reform models that are based on reliable research and effective practices: +\$96,483

Special Education Grants to States assist states in providing a free appropriate public education to more than 6.3 million children with disabilities nationally: +\$4,840,301

Pell Grants provide grant assistance to help low-income undergraduate students attend college: +\$1,500,000

Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants provide grant assistance to low-income undergraduate students: + \$82,968

Federal Work-Study helps undergraduate and graduate students pay for college through part-time work assistance: + \$69,761

In addition, under the Gear Up program, 2 grants are operating in Alaska to create links between middle schools and postsecondary institutions and prepare at-risk youth for college. Bipartisan negotiators reached an agreement to increase funding by \$125 million to \$325 million for Gear Up. These resources are needed to allow the \$1,534,912 in grants now operating in Alaska to continue and to allow for 12 new State awards and 140 new Partnership awards around the nation.

To strengthen future teachers' ability to use technology in their classrooms, the Preparing Tomorrows Teachers to Use Technology program has committed \$499,789 in grants operating in Alaska. The agreement would increase funding for the program nationally from \$75 million to \$125 million to continue the current grants and to fund 90 additional grants around the nation to serve 89,000 more teachers.

"I hope that when Congress returns to work next week, it will move forward with this nearly \$8 billion increase and go one step further to pass school modernization tax legislation," Riley said, "It would be incredibly irresponsible for Congress to adjourn yet again without addressing America's priorities."

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Note to editors: These numbers are estimates of what Alaska would get in the bipartisan agreement for FY2001 compared to what they would get under the continuing resolution.

* The 21st Century After-School Program functions as a competition. Projections for the increase that is at risk are based on the assumption that each state would receive the same proportion of the new funds as were received under previous competitions.

